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ABSTRACT

Having defined pantomime as the art of communicating ideas and emotions without dialogue, this report stresses the role of the body in suggesting an idea, impression, sensation, or character and offers a series of exercises to help develop the muscular coordination and graceful movement characteristic of good pantomime technique. The first series of exercises presented reviews the principles of relaxation and concentration necessary to visualize the size, weight, and texture of imaginary objects while the next set stresses the role of posture in suggesting a character's mood and attitude. Other exercises that help develop the precise hand gestures necessary to convey significant moods and attitudes and suggest specific forms are offered. The report further develops the art of gesture with exercises emphasizing the importance of facial expression and bodily actions and enhances movement awareness with exercises requiring a bodily response to a suggested mood or attitude. Finally, characterization, which involves placing a well-defined character in a specific situation or environment, is developed by a series of exercises intended as models for imitation. The report also provides a series of supplementary exercises useful for developing the skills of handling props and working in group pantomimes. (HOD)

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PANTOMIME: DEVELOPING IMAGINATIVE PERFORMANCE SKILLS

Gerald Lee Ratliff

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CS 504 450

"PANTOMIME: DEVELOPING IMAGINATIVE PERFORMANCE SKILLS"

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> "Only in...imagination does every truth find an effective and undeniable existence. Imagination, not invention, is the supreme master of art as of life."
>
> ---Joseph Conrad

Pantomime, the art of communicating ideas and emotions without dialogue, preceded the first recorded instances of primitive drama, developed as a separate art form during the Middle Ages, and has now become an established part of contemporary entertainment. The primary elements of pantomime include the imaginative performance techniques of "illusion" and "illustration."

Illusion, a visual and physical suggestion of objects and space, is dependent upon your ability to correctly interpret various obvious impressions that are made upon the senses. For example, the pantomime performer selects and suggests lines, shapes, masses, or areas that have impressed the senses as potential material for dramatic recreation. In the course of an individual performance, the pantomime artist describes the potential situations, delineates the abstract or concrete objects present, and portrays the standard or unique characters that have resulted from casual or acute observation of reality. This performance usually takes place in a bare, soundless playing area; and the pantomime performer attempts to "fill the void" with ideas, impressions, sensations, and character portraits that have been sketched from a perceptive and imaginative study of reality.

Illustration, a dramatic story used to explain or to clarify the illusion, is dependent upon your ability to script a series of episodes without dialogue into a meaningful perception of reality that

communicates an image, a theme, and a character to the audience. For example, the pantomime artist uses illustration to represent and to suggest the basic characteristics of the experience, the sensation, or the character observed in reality. Illustration, expressed in terms of physical action, permits the pantomime performer to convey the essence of the story being told in a concise and yet creative manner.

BASIC CHARACTERISTICS

Because pantomime involves "acting without words," you should cultivate an understanding of the role that the body plays in suggesting an idea, impression, sensation, or character. Especially useful is that you learn to use your body expressively through conscious exercise until you have developed the muscular coordination and graceful movement that characterizes good pantomime technique.

BODY

The first step in muscular cordination and graceful movement that suggests good pantomime technique is relaxation. In order to prepare the body for the specific series of actions needed to suggest the illusion and the illustration of either a character or a situation, review the following principles of relaxation as a preparatory exercise for the suggested pantomime which follows.

First, move to the center of a large, open space and concentrate on an imaginary object which is placed in the center of an imaginary audience. Raise, lower, and then rotate your head without moving the shoulders as you imagine the "size" of the object. Let your head move

freely from side to side, and then rotate the shoulders at first up and down, and then from side to side as you imagine the "weight" of the object. Now, move your arms in complete circles as you imagine the "texture" of the object.

Continue the mental concentration necessary to visualize the selected object as you follow the steps outlined below to evaluate your present state of relaxation.

1. Rotate your lower arms starting at the elbow.
2. Rotate your hands starting at the wrists.
3. Rotate your legs swinging forward and backward.
4. Rotate your feet starting at the ankles.
5. Rotate your entire body in vigorous circles.

When confident that you have a basic understanding of the total physical concentration needed for effective pantomime, including the preliminary concentration necessary to visualize the size, weight, and texture of imaginary objects, approach the following pantomime with as much care to "detail" and "delineation" as is called for by the action described. To assist you in sustaining the illusion and illustrating the selected story, a convenient performance model is included. To develop the story as presented, consult the suggested ACTION on the left as you explore the DETAIL called for on the right. Feel free, however, to add any creative or descriptive movement that will reinforce the illusion or the illustration desired. The "strange object" noted in the script should be the same one you imagined at the beginning of the exercise.

THE TRIAL

I

SCENE: An empty courtroom

CHARACTER: A vagrant

At the opening of the scene, a vagrant is asleep under the Recorder's table, stage left. As the sun streams in through an overhead skylight, the vagrant awakes to find himself in an empty courtroom. He does not remember "who" he is, "where" he is, or "why" he is carrying a strange object.

ACTION	DETAIL
The vagrant is suddenly awakened by a blinding overhead light.	He grasps at the legs of the table and hides his eyes.
Pause.	Pause.
The vagrant glances up toward the light and sits staring into space.	He raises his hands to his eyes, and strains his neck toward the light.
Pause.	Pause.
The vagrant rises, and stumbles toward the center of the playing area to glance at the light.	He stumbles forward with some hesitation, clutching the imaginary object. His knees are trembling, and his face is drawn.
Pause.	Pause.
The vagrant turns wildly from side to side, and appears stunned by the bright light. The power of the light forces him to the floor.	He shields his eyes, turns to the left and then to the right. Overcome wil silent emotion, he collapses upon the floor in front of the jury box. He clutches the imaginary object.
Pause.	Pause.
The vagrant rises, and moves to the jury box, stage right. He stares at the empty seats and imagines that "he" is on trial for some unnamed crime.	He slowly rises, clutching the imaginary object in his right hand, and advances toward the jury box. His eyes are enlarged with rage, and his body is tense.
Pause.	Pause.

II.

ACTION	DETAIL
The vagrant addresses the jury in pleading, silent sobs and whispers. The reactions of the jurors are mirrored in his painful and puzzling reactions.	He leans on the railing of the jury box, pleading silently with jurors. Each plea is met with rejection. In frustration and despair, he turns away.
Pause.	Pause.
The vagrant holds up the imaginary object, and implores the jury to listen to his story.	He carefully raises the imaginary object over his head, and then offers it to the jurors for inspection.
Pause.	Pause.
The vagrant suddenly rushes to the empty Judge's chair upstage center to address a silent plea for release.	He quickly retreats from the jury box, rushes to the Judge's chair and throws himself upon the mercy of the court.
Pause.	Pause.
The vagrant slumps over, falls to the floor, and is silent in his sobbing pleas.	He collapses, sinks heavily to the floor and clutches the imaginary object to his chest.
Pause.	Pause.

III.

The vagrant rises, moves again to the jury box and addresses each juror in turn.	He slowly rises, and moves with measured steps to the jury box. He glares at the jurors amid sobs and cries.
Pause.	Pause.
The vagrant slowly moves to the witness stand up left and sits.	He quietly moves to the witness stand, collapses in the chair and lowers head.
Pause.	Pause.
The vagrant responds with face and body to the imaginary questions posed by the Judge, by the jurors.	He raises his head, looks front, turns left, pounds on the arm of the chair and points toward the Judge.
Pause.	Pause.
The vagrant sits in the chair, crosses his legs,	He relaxes his body, leans back, glances toward the skylight and

ACTION	DETAIL
adjusts his rumpled clothing and nervously plays with the imaginary object.	and then begins to stroke the imaginary object as the Judge instructs the jurors.
Pause.	Pause.
The vagrant is startled by the interruption of the imaginary Judge.	He leaps nervously upward, and moves center stage in a state of anticipation.
Pause.	Pause.
The vagrant moves to the center of the playing area.	He stands center stage, trembling and weeping.
Pause.	Pause.
The vagrant moves toward a massive door up stage left. He hesitates.	He turns to face the jury, then moves with unsure steps toward the door stage left.
Pause.	Pause.
The vagrant exits.	He stops, turns back, sinks to his knees, rises and slowly exits holding the object over his head.

B L A C K O U T S L O W L Y

Now that you have a basic understanding of what is involved in "scripting" actions and details that result in the illusion and illustration necessary to pantomime selected episodes from reality or from your own imagination, prepare a series of scripted pantomimes for the following situations. In delineating the actions and the details that will give the situations dramatic impact, be very specific in your use of movement, gesture, and posture. Also, pay careful attention to the "order" of the episodes that comprises the pantomime so that your performance builds to a meaningful,logical climax.

... Imagine that you are on an airplane that suddenly develops engine difficulty, eventually forcing an emergency landing.

... Imagine that you are suddenlt detained by the police and held overnight in a dark and damp cell.

... Imagine that you are unexpectedly abandoned while on a sight-seeing tour in a foreign country.

... Imagine that you are working for a secret organization that specializes in gathering political or military information.

... Imagine that you are asked to impersonate a famous personality who is noted for very eccentric behavior at formal dinner parties.

When scripting potential episodes for these suggested performances, remember that the "mimetic instinct" so essential for good suggestion of character is applicable here. You can enhance your pantomime skills by a self-controlled and orderly system of observation, preparation, and rehearsal. In addition, alertness to events and situations in everyday life often provides the basic scenario needed to develop a complete and well-drawn pantomime that is fresh and creative.

POSTURE

Perfect coordination of all parts of your body is essential for expressive movement and graceful poise in pantomime. The pantomime performer, like the actor and theoral interpreter, should be fluid and flexible in using posture to suggest the mood and the attitude of the character in a selected episode. A basic requirement of good posture is that you appear natural and relaxed, with the bones of the body in their proper alignment. Although at ease and comfortable, your posture should also suggest alertness and anticipation to the action being visualized.

A good approach for you to follow in cultivating posture that is responsive to the demands of pantomime is to hold your body erect with the chest high, the chin up, the back flat, and the arms and the legs straight. It is also a good idea to place one foot slightly in front of the other, with the weight centered on the ball of the foot which is

slightly forward. This positioning suggests a pleasing and alert visual portrait, and also permits for rapid and varied momement necessary to convey changing ideas and emotions. To evaluate your present posture in terms of its suitability for the demands of pantomime, repeat the following exercise frequently until the sequence described becomes a natural part of your pantomime preparation.

1. Relax, and stand erect with the weight of your body on the balls of your feet.
2. Relax, and bend slightly forward with your arms almost touching the floor.
3. Relax, and place your right hand on your chest and your left hand at the small of your back.
4. Relax, and slowly raise your body upward so that you feel your hands being pushed apart.
5. Relax, and elevate your head to its original upright position.
6. Relax, holding the chin high and the arms and the legs straight.
7. Relax, and place your arms at the sides.
8. Now, keeping your chest high, head erect, and back flat, shift your weight to the ball of the right foot and step lightly forward.

The agility of movement suggested by a posture that is poised and confident is an added dimension to any character portrait being sketched in pantomime. Systematic exercises, like the one described above, should help you to control the tension and rigidity that often accompanies the initial pantomime experience. When you are confident that your posture is both correct and comfortable for expressive movement, turn your attention to the following exercise designed to cultivate the development of initial "character" through use of posture.

WEIGHT AND SEE

This selected exercise is intended to suggest to you that the

posture of the pantomime performer is just as valuable in suggesting a character's mood or attitude as spoken dialogue might be to the actor. Each detailed description of action given is representative of the careful attention to detail which characterizes good use of posture to highlight individual character traits. In responding to the selected descriptions, concentrate on direct and vigorous movement that reinforces the mood or the attitude of the character being treated; encourage your posture to "speak" for the action requested; and suggest the size, the weight, and the texture of the objects so mentioned. Develop and elaborate the episode until you have exhausted all potention avenues for the action described.

--- An old man slowly enters the playing area from stage left. He carroes an imaginary suitcase and smokes an imaginary pipe. He places the suitcase in the center of the playing area and sits. Pause. The suitcase is then opened, and the following objects are carefully removed: a "tie," a "letter," and a "portrait." Pause. The man rises, and his subsequent posture suggests the relationship of each object to his present situation.

--- A young girl enters hurriedly from stage right and crosses to center. She turns, and dashes off stage left. Pause. She returns, carrying a tray of food. The tray is placed on a chair center stage. Pause. The girl then places the following food on the floor center stage: a "loaf of bread," a "dish of potatoes," and a "plate of chicken." Pause. Her subsequent posture suggests the relationship pf each food to her hunger.

--- A camp counselor enters from up stage center carrying a box of recreational objects used in various games. Pause. The box is placed center stage and the following objects are removed: a "basketball," a "medicine ball," and a "tennis ball." Pause. In three separate areas of the playing space, the camp counselor demonstrates the use of the objects. His subsequent posture suggests the skill he possesses in relationship to the object being demonstrated.

In reviewing the selected exercises, you should have developed an

episode that consisted of a beginning, a middle, and an end. Your bodily responses should have reflected the suggested mood or attitude of the character, and any movement suggested should have highlighted the basic description of the "action" being described. In addition, your posture should have helped to spell out the relationship of the selected objects to the character being detailed; and there should have been careful attention given to specific sizes, weights, and textures.

With these thoughts in mind, conclude the exercise by using your posture to respond to the following poem. This concluding exercise should be thought of as a "silent" character sketch, in which the action being described in the poem is conveyed solely through posture to reveal the implied character's mood or attitude.

from A SHROPSHIRE LAD, by A.E. Housman

Be still, my soul, be still; the arms you bear are brittle,
Earth and high heaven are fixed of old and founded strong.
Think rather---call to thought, if now you grieve a little,
The days when we had rest, O soul, for they were long.

Men loved unkindness then, but lightness in the quarry
I slept and saw not; tears fell down, I did not mourn;
Sweat ran and blood sprang out and I was never sorry.
Then it was well with me, in days ere I was born.

GESTURE

The role of gesture, or any motivated movement of the body to express an idea or an emotion, is the key to understanding the art of pantomime. Gesture may include a subtle lift of the eyebrows, a flip-

pant toss of the head, a dramatic movement of the arm or hand, and a controlled kick of the leg. Proper use of selected gestures permits you to suggest a change of attitude or mood, and also helps order or "focus" audience attention on character development.

Generally, gestures that convey a change of mood or attitude in a character begin as a facial expression, then involve a bodily reaction, and conclude with an appropriate response of the arms, the hands, and the fingers. These reactions and responses, however, are incorporated into the performance "simultaneously" and appear as natural sequences of the mood or attitude being conveyed.

Effective gestures should originate "within" you, convey specific meanings, and be properly executed with strength and precision. For that reason, gestures should be refined so that there is no confusion about the location, the physical description, or the general properties of the person, the thing, or the object being described.

As an initial prelude to communicating silently with gestures, the following exercise is designed to develop the precision of hand gestures necessary to convey significant moods and attitudes, and to spell out specifically selected shapes and forms. Begin the exercise by rotating each finger of your hands first clockwise, and then counter clockwise. Now, move each finger up and down; and then side to side. Keeping your fingers straight, move your outer fingers "away" from your inner fingers; and then slowly "return" your hands together. Placing hands out, with palms up, repeat the following sequence:

1. Starting with the little finger of your right hand, "close" the hand by rolling in each finger one at a time. Now "open" the hand in reverse order, starting with the index finger. Repeat this part of the exercise with the left hand, "closing" and "opening" in the same manner.

2. Starting with your hands out, palms up, and hands slightly touching, "roll" the fingers of your right hand "closed." Now, "open" your hands in reverse order; one finger at a time, starting with the index finger. Repeat this part of the exercise with the left hand, "closing" and "opening" in the same manner.

3. Now, repeat the exercise from the opening description at least five times in each of the following tempos:
   a. first, repeat the entire process very slowly so that you free the hands from tension.
   b. second, repeat the entire process very quickly so that you are able to control the speed of the gesture.
   c. third, repeat the entire process moderately so that your hands are both free from tension and yet in control of the gesture.
   d. fourth, repeat the entire process very slowly so that you refine and clarify the role of the fingers and the hands in executing gestures.
   e. fifth, repeat the entire process very quickly so that your gestures may appear specific and yet spontaneous.

When confident that your use of the fingers and the hands is both relaxed and controlled, execute the following hand gestures with as much precision and detail as possible.

--- Open an umbrella.
--- Pour a cup of tea.
--- Eat a donut.
--- Wash a window.
--- Dial a phone.
--- Crack an egg.
--- Fly a kite.
--- Peel an onion.
--- Open a door.
--- Pinch a penny.

To evaluate the precision and detail with which you have executed these selected gestures, conclude the exercise by gathering all of the materials needed to actually complete the tasks described above. Place each object in a large box and then draw one at random. Note the size, the

weight, and the texture of the object. Use the object to complete the task described above. Now, discard the actual object and repeat the imaginary task using only the fingers and the hands to suggest the action described.

Is the gesture as precise as your use of the actual object? Is the gesture as specific in terms of the size, the weight, and the texture of the actual object? When you are confident that the answer to these questions is "yes," select another object from the box and continue the exercise until all ten of the actions described above have been detailed with silent precision using only the fingers and the hands.

FACIALS

Facial expression is also an essential ingredient in the art of pantomime, and is the most obvious visual clue which suggests your mood or attitude to the audience. Without the animated expressions of the face, your pantomime performance is incomplete and the range of your creative suggestion is severely limited. The (5) basic facial expressions most common to pantomime include "sad," "happy," "angry," "frightened," and "surprised." Although these selected expressions may vary from individual to individual, there are significant similarities which warrant listing.

SAD

In the sad expression the facial muscles are relaxed, and appear to "sag." The extreme corners of the eyebrows are pointed "downward," and there is a pronounced frown on the face.

HAPPY	In the happy expression the facial muscles appear to be lifted upward in a suggestion of extreme pleasure. The eyebrows and the muscles of the cheeks are elevated, and there is a pronounced smile on the face. In addition, the eyes are frequently aglow with joy that radiates.
ANGRY	In the angry expression the facial muscles appear to converge in a straight line to the nose, and the eyebrows suggest a worried look. There is also a severe frown displayed on the face, and the eyes may appear to squint.
FRIGHTENED	In the frightened expression the facial muscles form a combination of the sad and the happy look, with the upper half of the face displaying the "sad" look and the lower half of the face displaying the "happy" look. In addition, the eyes are opened rather wide and the nose is slightly wrinkled.
SURPRISED	In the surprised expression the facial muscles appear to be drawn tightly from the chin to the forehead, and the eyebrows are arched upwards. In addition, the mouth appears to form an exaggerated "O."

Most facial expressions are derved "full front" to the audience from these five basic types of visual suggestion. When used in combination with gesture and bodily actions they add greatly to your portrayal of character mood or attitude. In attempting to duplicate the expressions listed above, begin by standing in front of a mirror and slowly move from one expression to another until the basic principles of each facial muscle involved is "felt." Then, combine facial expressions in a series of rapid mood or attitude changes that range from "surprise" to "anger" to "sadness" to "fright" to "happiness."

When you have experienced the "pull and tear" of the facial muscles on each of the desired expressions, concentrate on capturing

the following list of expressions in as much detail as possible. Although it is sometimes helpful to use a videotape or a camera to capture your flexibility in suggesting the progression of different moods and attitudes, the mirror is still the best source for your study of facial expression.

--- facial reaction to an unexpected invitation
--- facial reaction to a disturbing announcement
--- facial reaction to a perplexing problem
--- facial reaction to a change of weather
--- facial reaction to an unsuccessful adventure
--- facial reaction to a mysterious happening
--- facial reaction to a severe disappointment
--- facial reaction to an unexpected success
--- facial reaction to a continuing difficulty
--- facial reaction to a pleasant relief

Having explored the role of the facial muscles to express a variety of moods and attitudes, conclude the exercise by adding "bodily actions" and "gestures" to the following suggested situations. Recall, however, that bodily actions and gestures should clearly reinforce the action suggested; and that the mutual compatability of facial expressions, bodily actions, and gestures lies in their working together to express a specific mood or attitude exhibited by the character.

1. You are a foreign exchange student in a new environment. Communicate with your hosts in an attempt to express your appreciation of a work of art on display at the local museum.

2. You are a contestant on a television game show. Communicate the progression of feelings and attitudes ranging from correctly answering simple questions to incorrectly answering the $25,000 question.

3. You are an innocent bystander who happens to witness a bank robbery. Communicate with the policeman who is questioning you about the specific details of the robbery, including a detailed description of the assailants.

4. You are a celebrity being interviewed on a well-known radio program. Communicate your feelings and attitudes to the host's following questions: Is it true what the papers have written about your private life? Would you have us believe that you have no interest in continuing your career? May I say that you are quite commited to working actively for social change? And how would you express your attitude toward being interviewed on this program today?

5. You are the local gossip of a small community who is giving a reception for a visiting dignitary. Communicate your impressions of the visitor to four of your best friends, including a detailed summary of the visitor's behavior before the reception.

MOVEMENT

The role of movement in pantomime is to suggest "mation," or the performer's ability to sustain the impression of passage of the body from one area of the playing space to another. Frequently, the pantomime performer also tries to suggest that there is movement within a strictly confined playing space.

In developing movement awareness to suggest character mood or attitude, it is important for you to learn the basic principles of "relaxation," "concentration," and "amplification" of the separate parts of the body. To do this it is often necessary to think of the parts of the body in isolation, and to combine parts of the body when expressing a complete idea, mood, attitude, or emotion.

For example, in expressing the idea that "love is good" you should isolate and exaggerate the feelings suggested by this notion in facial expressions, arm and leg motions, and individual bodily actions. The total communication of the idea is then expressed when "each" of the separate parts of the partly incorporated body "combine" to indicate an appropriate movement that reinforces the selected idea.

To explore the relationship of the separate parts of the body to meaningful and expressive movement, approach the following exercise as

though you were a "dancer." Respond to the suggested mood or attitude noted with the part of the body indicated; and then combine the individual parts noted for a complete expression of the mood or attitude desired.

1. Respond to the mood of despair using only the "arms" and the "legs." Now incorporate the "facial expressions," especially those which reinforce the strain of despair. When confident that the mood of despair is suggested in the total body response, move forward in the playing area and improvise a dance that reinforces the suggested mood.

2. Respond to the mood of anger using only the "legs" and the "eyes." Now incorporate the "left hand," the "chest," and any other "facial expressions" which suggest the mood of anger. When confident that the mood of anger is suggested in the total body response, move backward in the playing area and improvise a dance that reinforces the suggested mood.

3. Respond to the mood of joy using only the "arms," the "toes," and the "torso." Now incorporate the "legs" and "facial expressions" which suggest the mood of joy. When confident that the mood of joy is suggested in the total body response, move to the right side of the playing area and improvise a dance that reinforces the suggested mood.

4. Respond to the mood of indecision using only "facial expressions." Now incorporate the "arms," the "legs," and the "torso" as part of the suggested mood if indecision. When confident that the mood of indecision is suggested in the total body response, move to the left side in the playing area and improvise a dance that reinforces the suggested mood.

The "motions" suggested by your responses to the individual moods described in theprevious exercise should have "freed" your body for meaningful expressions of character movement. Although the motions may have appeared relatively simple, your awareness pf bodily actions and potential movements to reinforce selected moods or attitudes is the beginning step in creative use of movement to detail and to define character. The improvised dance should also have prepared you for a

creative and yet sensitive response to moods or attitudes which involve total bodily activity.

With these basic principles of movement in mind, complete the following character portraits by adding appropriate bodily actions and motions which help to clearly reinforce and define the suggested characters. In your response, concentrate on appropriate facial expressions and posture; amplify, or exaggerate, appropriate gestures and bodily actions; and feel free and relaxed to use as much of the playing area as possible.

--- A medieval King is in mortal conflict with his arch enemy. There is a fierce struggle, and the King is eventually the victor.

--- A primitive witch doctor is exorcising evil spirits from a sickly tribesman. There is a ceremonial ritual performed, and the stricken tribesman is miraculously cured.

--- A World War I infantryman is approaching the outskirts of an enemy post. There is an explosion of a hand grenade, and the infantryman falls to the ground.

--- A juggler is performing on a crowded street corner. There is a sudden bomb threat, and the crowd of spectators rushes to several exits.

---- A part attendant is repairing a concession stand. There There is an accident with the hammer, and the attendant injures a hand.

CHARACTERIZATION

Characterization in pantomime involves placing a well-defined character in a specific situation or environment, and then suggesting relevant and meaningful changes in mood or attitude. In observing and recording potential characters, situations, or environments for performance you should first determine the "general characteristics" of your selection before proceeding to a specific and detailed performance blueprint. Like the beginning actor, the first responsibility is

to "score" and to "notate" your observations so that a general outline of the character, the situation, or the environment is preserved.

For example, the general characteristics needed to outline potential characters might include age, height, weight, posture, and bodily actions. The general characteristics needed to outline potential situations might include the "story line," or plot, of the pantomime; the episodes needed to build the story to a climax; the moods and attitudes expressed by the characters; and the reactions the characters might experience in the selected environment. The general characteristics needed to outline potential environments might include the positioning of imaginary windows, doors, or furniture and the placement of any set pieces or props that reinforce the situation or detail the character.

In considering sources and experiences that might be adapted to pantomime, you should also keep in mind the following performance precepts:

1. Direct movements and expressions "forward"toward the audience, and coordinate gestures and bodily actions so that the focus of the pantomime is audience centered.

2. Visualize characters, situations, and environments in careful detail, knowing precisely the location of props, furniture, or entrances and exits; the sequence of the episodes; and the changes of mood or attitude the character experiences.

3. Script a pantomime that suggests "motivated" sequences that logically and organically grow out of what precedes them, and give your creative script continuity by arranging the episodes so that there is a beginning, a middle, and an end.

4. Keep actions and reactions simple and direct, and incorporate complimentary movements and gestures that help to define and to amplify the story line being related.

5. Plan the initial and the concluding episodes very carefully, setting the scene and revealing the characters in the first incident and then concluding the pantomime at a specific moment or with a specific action in the last incident.

While gathering potential ideas that might lead to individual pantomimes based upon observation or personal experience, you may find the following suggested exercises as valuable models for imitation. Pay particular attention to "spelling out" the basic characteristics suggested for character, and rehearse placement of suggested set pieces so that movement and stage business is executed with competence and certainty.

"GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER?"

Butler
Age 43
Short
Stout

SITUATION: A formal dinner party for 50 guests. The slightly intoxicated butler greets and then begins to serve the meal. The guests are visiting dignitaries from foreign embassies, and guest of honor is an Ambassador.

ENVIRONMENT: Banquet room in a large hotel with large dining table, 50 chairs, 2 French doors left and right, and a bay window center.

"GENERAL HOSPITAL AT RUSH HOUR"

Hospital Aide
Age 20
Tall
Thin

SITUATION: A late night shift at the General Hospital admission room. The slightly deaf hospital aide is making the rounds of the ward to check patients before filling out work sheets for the night's summary of duty.

ENVIRONMENT: Corridor and small office, adjacent to a waiting room. There are 8 doors that lead to patient's single rooms, and a sliding door to the office entrance right.

"THE LAZY ARMS HOTEL"

Hotel Clerk
Age 65
Tall
Heavy

SITUATION: The last day of work before retirement at a plush seaside resort hotel. The slightly nervous hotel clerk is anxiously anticipating retirement, but is responsible for completing the evening accounts as the Manager arrives with 3 friends.

ENVIRONMENT: Front desk of a large hotel, with a swinging door at side left. A cash register, a bell, and a telephone are located on desk right of guest book.

"HERE WE GO LOOP D'LOOP"

Traffic Cop
Age 30
Medium Height
Medium Weight

SITUATION: Rush hour traffic jam fifteen minutes before the expected arrival of the Mayor's motorcade tour of the city. The highly frustrated traffic cop is confronted with angry motorists and a disturbed superior officer, who is taking notes left of the long line of stalled cars.

ENVIRONMENT: A crowded street in the center of a large city. The traffic cop is located right of a traffic light, and is directing a line of automobiles around an illegally parked truck.

SUPPLEMENTARY EXERCISES

To enhance the element of believable characterization in your pantomime it is often necessary to establish an "intimate" relationship with the suggestive props imagined for use in the performance so that they reflect

character mood or attitude. This element of believability is essential if you are to sketch a well-defined character portrait, and one of the best approaches for achieving this goal is to handle your props in such a manner that they are an "extension" of the character with whom they are associated.

In the following exercise, pay special attention to the desired mood or attitude noted and "handle" your imaginary props so that the audience also senses the desired objective. Again, you may wish to rehearse the handling of the actual props suggested before beginning the exercise by exploring their properties while blindfolded.

PROP	MOOD OR ATTITUDE
1. A cigarette case	1. Suspicion and mistrust
2. A concrete block	2. Energy and enthusiasm
3. A door knob	3. Fear and trembling
4. A briefcase	4. Sadness and despair
5. A baloon	5. Hope and aspiration
6. A newspaper	6. Fatigue and weariness
7. A garbage can	7. Anxiety and anticipation
8. A transistor radio	8. Anger and rage
9. A tulip	9. Joy and zest
10. A handkerchief	10. Calm and contented

When you are confident that the imaginary props accurately reflect the desired character mood or attitude suggested, incorporate "each" prop and its corresponding mood or attitude into the following scripted pantomime. Remember to concentrate on suggesting specific weights, shapes, and textures. Feel free to add any creative "inventions" that might give the suggested story line more dramatic impact.

"ON A CLEAR DAY..."

On a clear day in late June, David turned the "door knob" of his

uptown Manhattan apartment and left the stuffy tenement for a stroll in Central Park. Arriving at the lunch hour, he discovered that his favorite bench was already occupied by two ladies eating Coney Island hotdogs. He stared at them for a moment and then seated himself on a "concrete block" to the right of his favorite bench.

Staring blankly into the afternoon sun, David reaches into his "briefcase" and fumbles randomly for something to read. He draws out a month old "newspaper" and glances alternately from newspaper to bench, from bench to newspaper. He rises after a brief moment and moves forward toward the "garbage can" located left of the bench and deposits the newspaper. Glancing again toward the bench, David reaches into his coat pocket and pulls out a "cigarette case." Lighting a cigarette, he moves in swift circles around the bench. Tired from his rapid activity, he returns to the concrete block, sits, and pulls a "handkerchief" from his vest pocket.

Wiping the perspiration from his forehead, David again opens the briefcase and removes his "transistor radio," which is promptly turned up to full volume. Again, he glances toward the bench and the twp ladies, who are now staring at him. A vendor passes and David signals him to approach the concrete block. After some indecision, David decides to purchase a bright, red "baloon"; which he then fastens to his left arm. With a dramatic leap forward, he dances about the playing area in an improvised waltz.

The two ladies rise and start to move away stage right. They pause, turn toward David, and halt. One lady steps forward and presents David with a black "tulip." David takes the black tulip and moves to the vacant bench, where he sits in a state of ignorant bliss contemplating the black tulip.

In coming to terms with the role that the body plays in suggesting movement for a pantomime performance, it is often useful to think of given movements in "musical" terms. Each movement, based upon the specific mood or attitude of the character involved, has its own <u>rhythm, tempo</u>, <u>duration</u>, and <u>time.</u>

In approaching the following exercise, imagine that you are isolated in space and that definite changes in "energy" and "speed" are necessary to transport you from one area of the playing space to another. Then, match your body movement from one area of the playing space to another to accomplish the suggested action described below. Concentrate on the musical quality of movement, and explore expressive bodily actions that give a rhythmical quality to your pantomime performance. Also remember to involve the entire body in the movement, from the tips of the toes to the top of the head, to execute the action described.

--- A thief moving across a darkened alley.
--- A near-sighted professor entering a crowded room.
--- A fashion model displaying the latest Paris clothing.
--- A travelling salesman walking door-to-door.
--- A commuter rushing toward a departing subway train.
--- A figure skater gliding on an ice rink.
--- A drum major marching at the head of the school band.
--- A villain stealing slyly toward a beautiful heroine.

When you are confident that your movement has begun to reflect a rhythm, a tempo, a duration, and a time that corresponds to selected character moods or attitudes, supply the needed "musicality" in movement that will give the following pantomime scenario variety and vitality.

"I COULD HAVE DANCED ALL NIGHT"

It is Saturday night at the popular Disco Haven, an after hours private dancing club. Arriving late and anticipating a packed house, you are pleasantly relieved to discover that there is no admission charge tonight. Checking your topcoat and hat, you move toward a table of friends and greet them warmly. The music begins and you are anxious to demonstrate the new dancing steps you have been learning at the TWO LEFT FEET DANCE STUDIO.

The band strikes up a memorable selection of tunes and you respond with exhibiting solo skills in the fox trot, the rumba, the rock and roll, the waltz, and the punk dances. Exhausted but pleased with your performance, you now move to several other tables and greet other friends. Then, see a fascinating spectator who has been watching you with keen interest. Approach cautiously, introduce yourself, and offer to give a guided tour of the dance club. Point out the game room, the reading room, the lounge, the patio, and the television room; punctuating your imaginary description of each room with an appropriate bodily action or gesture.

Now escourt the spectator to the front door, pause to collect your topcoat and hat, and then move briskly out the door as the music continues to roar and your friends continue to stare in the background.

Now that you have an understanding of the role that "musicality" plays in giving a pantomime scenario variety of movement, approach the following

silent scenes with an imaginative use of "bodily actions" and "gestures" that will extend the basic storyline into a well-developed episode. Again, concentrate on a rhythmical quality in the movement that will give the character described dimension and detail. In the rehearsal period devoted to acquainting yourself with the props suggested in the following scripted episodes, try to establish and maintain precise weights, shapes, and textures while blindfolded.

"SHOOTOUT AT THE O.K. CORRAL"

An Old West cowboy arrives in town from the Rio Grande Territory. He wanders into the Lazy Susan Saloon to wet his whistle after a two-year cattle round-up. He stands at the old, oaken bar and orders four successive shots of GRANDFATHER WHISKEY, which he downs quickly. Pretty Sally Smoot enters upstage left, and slowly approaches. They have drinks together and then move to a table down right. They play cards and exchange knowing glances and winks. Suddenly, Pistol Pete enters hurriedly through the swinging barroom door up center. Pretty Sally Smoot rises and exits in haste. The Old West cowboy and Pistol Pete now square off in a shootout.

"THE DAY THE CIRCUS CAME TO TOWN"

A circus clown is performing in the BIG TIME TENT SHOW before a capacity audience. The clown, riding a tricycle and balancing a tray of glasses, circles the outline of the arena and leaps from the tricycle without spilling a single drop of water from the glasses. The clown entertains the appreciative audience with a fire-eating demonstration, a magic show, a knife-throwing exhibition, and a balancing act on the high wire. Suddenly, a cage of wild tigers is loose and running dangerously throughout the arena.

"FLASHER DORIGHT, SPACE CADET IN 20001"

Flasher Doright, a dashing space cadet on assignment in the JUPITER FLEET of the TERRESTIAL MEDIUM QUAD IV, is seated in front of the control board on his trusty miniship, "The Twerp." He adjusts the air pressure, the ventilation gauge, the plutonium screen, and the arch light in preparation for a landing on the satellite station IGOR. Suddenly, the flashing red

"ABORT"light signals impending disintegration and the miniship begins to rotate out of control, eventually grinding to an abrupt halt that leaves Flasher Doright suspended in space high above the landing site.

"JUNGLE FEVER"

A big game hunter is on safari in the wilds of Africa, in search of the rare one-horned Louse, a ferocious, man-eating beast that weighs several thousand pounds. The hunter is cutting his way through the thick growth of vines and branches which impede his pathway with a shining, stainless steel knife; which he wields recklessly in front of himas he moves. The mosquitoes and gnats attack his neck and arms, but he plods on in a frantic search for the intriguing prey. Exhausted from fatigue and lack of nourishment, the hunter pauses momentarily in a small clearing and begins to unpack his knapsack. He takes out a canteen of water, dried biscuits, and a small jar of honey. Suddenly, the fierce Louse appears directly in front of the clearing and charges without warning.

"THE PRINCESS AND THE FROG"

Princess Plain is very sad on the eve of the annual CELEBRITY BALL. She wants to attend the party but is despondent because she is not truly one of the beautiful people. A WISHFUL THINKING spirit appears and tells Princess Plain that she, too, can be a beautiful person if only she can find an ugly frog to kiss at the precise stroke of midnight. The grateful Princess Plain hurries to the frog pond behind the castle and waits for the fateful midnight hour. At the exact moment the castle bells toll twelve, Princess Plain seizes the first ugly frog she sees and kisses it happily. Nothing happens, so Princess Plain decides to go to the CELEBRITY BALL anyway. She enters the crowded ballroom and chats with the celebrities, dances with the old men, and then begins to stuff herself with horse mackerel finger sandwiches and hors d'oeuvres. Suddenly, the ugly frog leaps into the ballroom from an open window and begins to dance the "Frog's Legs," a daring and provocative new disco number.

Group pantomimes are also an interesting approach to scripting and performing an extended story line. They do, however, require more careful coordination of characterization, movement, and bodily actions than the individual pantomimes you have been doing in the previous exercises.

In approaching the group pantomime, particular attention should be given to the number of characters who appear and to the setting of the selected environment. In addition, the following general guidelines may be of value in helping you and your friends script a sustained group pantomime.

1. Approach the group pantomime like a one-act play, limiting the story line to a central theme with secondary episodes that involve each of the participating characters.

2. Script the group pantomime so that there is silent narration, in movement or bodily actions, that introduces each character and the environment; a series of brief episodes that build the story line to a climax; and a definite concluding episode that summarizes the action of the story line.

3. Limit the number of characters who appear in the group pantomime to a workable number, usually 4 or 5 types of contrasting personality. Motivate each character's entrance, exit, and action so that the characters are well-defined and help to advance the story line being presented.

4. Place the story line of the group pantomime in an attractive or unusual setting, and have each character devote considerable time to familiarizing himself or herself with the specific location of doors, windows, or set pieces which frame the imaginary locale.

5. Rehearse the group pantomime frequently so that there is a unified, well-coordinated effect that suggests considerable preparation.

In scripting a group pantomime, do not fail to consider sources like playscripts, novels, short stories, films, essays, letters, newspaper accounts, poems, television series, radio programs, or personal daily observation and experience.

Some specific sources of potential pantomimes for group performance might include a silent dramatization of Fyodor Dostoevsky's THE PEASANT MAREY, Ernest Hemingway's THE KILLERS, James Joyce's THE DEAD, Thornton

Wilder's OUR TOWN, Edward Albee's THE AMERICAN DREAM, Geoffrey Chaucer's THE CANTERBURY TALES, Samuel Beckett's WAITING FOR GODOT, T. S. Eliot's THE HOLLOW MEN, or John Steinbeck's OF MICE AND MEN.

Other interesting sources of potential pantomimes especially suited for the group performance might include a silent dramatization of selected episodes from Franz Kafka's THE TRIAL, Nathaniel Hawthorne's THE SCARLET LETTER, Edith Sitwell's THE OUTCASTS, Pear Buck's THE GOOD EARTH, Willa Cather's DEATH COMES FOR THE ARCHBISHOP; and selected episodes from popular sources like "Star Wars," "Star Trek," "Mission: Impossible," "I Love Lucy," "All In The Family," "Raiders Of The Lost Ark," "Superman," "Happy Days," "Strange Encounters Of The Third Kind," or "Airport."

As a beginning exercise in group pantomime, you may wish to consider the following suggestions for a scripted performance of 15-20 minutes. Using the four character types given, supply a "story line" that will develop a central theme of your choice; provide "secondary episodes" that will enhance the development of the participating characters conceived by the group performers; select a specific "environment," or setting, in which each of the imagined characters might logically appear; and build the story line to a "climax" with plot complication, disguises, mistaken identities, or other interesting "twists" of episode construction and development.

--- an absent-minded elderly man, a persistent young girl, a shy young man, and a middle-aged spinster

--- an unwelcome guest, a kindly teacher, a patient student, and a mischievous little boy

--- an old maid, an energetic salesman, a romantic young girl, and a mischievous little boy

--- an inquisitive neighbor, a suspicious husband, a friendly priest, and a sobbing wife

Now, repeat the exercise by adding an appropriate "new" character who enters the group pantomime as a fifth episode development. Restructure the group pantomime so that the fifth character who enters "resolves" the story line that has already been advanced in the first part of the exercise.

Continue to "refine" and to "polish" the group pantomime until the story line and the epidodes have a continuity of action that builds to a clear-cut conclusion. When you are confident that the group pantomime is well-structured, well-developed, and well-rehearsed, invite an audience to a public performance! You may also wish to make this a weekly event, scripting, editing, rehearsing, and polishing the following situations and characters for public presentation.

--- the waiting room of a of a large, urban hospital with a young intern, an inexperienced nurse's aide, a middle-age man in a wheelchair, and a forceful supervisor

--- the vegetable counter of a local supermarket with a weary attendant, an indecisive shopper, an energetic young child, and an annoyed store manager

--- the meeting room of the "Alliance For Action" community improvement committee with a boring speaker, a faint old man, an uninvited guest, and an exhausted chairman

Another interesting source of potential pantomime material for the group performance is cartoons. Using well-known and easily recognizable cartoon characters presents the audience with a "frame of reference" which is immediate and understandable, and permits the group to elaborate on selected episodes so that the story line appears well-developed.

Some examples of cartoons that may be scripted for the group performance might include "The Wizard of Id," "Doonesbury," "Pogo," "Blondie," "Dick Tracy," "Beetle Bailey," "Nancy," "Hi and Lois," "Prince Valiant," "Ziggy," "Mutt and Jeff," "B.C.," "Archie," "Gasoline Alley," and "Annie." With these potential sources of group pantomime material in mind, select your favorite cartoon characters and script an episodic story line that revolves around the following suggestions. Remember to plan the character entrances and exits carefully, and keep the progression of action simple and unhurried. Alao take care that each cartoon character who appears in the story line is developed as a distinct personality with recognizable individuality that is similar to the original treatment in the cartoon strip.

--- a mad scientist is planning to destroy the world, and your cartoon characters must prevent him from accomplishing his evil plans.

--- a foreign spy has stolen the secret ingredient needed for a major defense weapon, and your cartoon characters must intercept him before the ingredients are passed on to a waiting sccomplice.

--- a kindly old man is threatened with eviction from his house unless he can pay back taxes, and your cartoon characters stage a variety show to raise the needed monies.

--- a dangerous criminal has escaped from prison and is hiding in an abandoned warehouse, and your cartoon characters must devise a plan to gain entrance to the warehouse to capture the criminal.